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Names

BY CAROL BEGGY & MARK SHANAHAN

At Notre Dame, Weis watchers

1 Notre Dame football fan **Shane Igoe** is thrilled with **Charlie Weis**'s 5-2 record, it's the coach's waistline that worries him. The ND alum has created a website dedicated to helping the former Pats offensive coordinator watch his weight. (Weis, you'll recall, tipped the scales at more than 300 pounds before gastric bypass surgery.) "If you catch him downing a circus lunch at North Dining hall, why not peel over to him and talk some Orange Bowl strategy over a couple oranges?" Igoe writes at www.weiswatchers.com. What started out as a joke has become a popular website among Notre Dame students, a few of whom have signed Igoe's online petition pledging to support the effort to keep Charlie from getting too chunky. "I mean no ill will with this," says Igoe, who thanks **Bill Belichick** every day for letting Weis land in South Bend. "It's just that if we want to keep Charlie around as long as possible — and we do — we need to keep him away from Burger King." And it looks like Weis, an ND grad, might be around the Fighting Irish for awhile. Over the weekend, the university announced it's given the 48-year-old coach a new contract that expires in 2015.

Manso secures the writes

The tragic case of Christa Worthington has captured the imagination of **Peter Manso**, who has a deal to write about the fashion writer's death and the trial of her accused killer **Christopher McGowen**. Manso's other books include a biography of **Norman Mailer** and "Provo: Art, Sex, and Money on the Outer Cape." The untitled book doesn't have a release date. . . . Kudos to Boston-bred author writer **Sarah Shun-lien Bynum**, who just learned she's one of 10 recipients of the prestigious Whiting Writers Award for her debut novel, "Madeleine Is Sleeping." . . . Dr. **Paul Farmer**, founder of the Cambridge-based Partners in Health, is being recognized for his efforts to improve the health of people around the world. The subject of **Tracy Kidder**'s book "Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World" is one of 12 people being honored at this week's TIME Global Health Summit in New York. Actress **Glenn Close**, whose father was a doctor in Zaire, will introduce Farmer and the other honorees.

Inspiring words and deeds

2 In town anyway to promote his new book, "Before I Got Here: The Wondrous Things We Hear When We Listen to the Souls of our Children," **Blair Underwood** made a beeline to The Bay State Banner's 40th anniversary party at the Seaport Hotel Saturday. The "Sex and the City" heartthrob told us his new book, a collection of stories inspired by children, will not be his last. In fact, he said he's already hard at work on an "erotic murder mystery" (Now, that we'll read.) Honored at the gala were **S. Allen Counter**, the Harvard prof who's trying to establish a memorial for African-American slaves, Banner arts editor **Kay Bourne**, Boston Foundation VP **Gail Snowden**, and **Tom Brown**, founder of Jobs Clearing House Inc.

Names can be reached at names@globe.com or at 617-929-8253.

1 Charlie Weis with the Patriots in 2000 (left), and as Notre Dame's head coach earlier this month

2 Above left: Blair Underwood (left) and Melvin Miller, publisher of The Bay State Banner; above right: photographer Don West (left) shows his work to Tom and Angela Menino.

BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2000 (TOP LEFT); MICHAEL CONROY/ASSOCIATED PRESS (TOP RIGHT); PHOTOS BY BILL BRETT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

'Hostel' hits theaters

"Hostel," the latest horror flick from Newton native **Eli Roth** (above), will finally hit theaters Dec. 21. Executive produced by **Quentin Tarantino**, the film stars **Jay Hernandez** as a backpacker who becomes entangled in — what else? — a demented underground torture ring. Described as relentlessly graphic and deeply disturbing by those who saw the unfinished product at the Toronto International Film Festival, the movie "pushes the envelope of the genre," says Roth, whose last movie, "Cabin Fever," starred a flesh-eating virus.

Brainy bunch

Word is **Jane Pauley** and **John Kerry** will be the guests of honor at Friday's opening of the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT. The new institute is named for International Data Group founder **Pat McGovern** and his wife, entrepreneur **Lore Harp McGovern**, whose generous donation of $350 million made the place possible. At Friday's event, Pauley is expected to talk about her struggles with bipolar disorder, while Kerry will make an announcement about brain research.

Tell-all writer has more to say and do

▶ CARVER
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"I had noticed that there weren't any books around about our era," she says by phone from her home in Dover. "It was over. It was gone, and all there was was like Lydia Lunch's all caps, and Henry Rollins, with all of his exclamation points. And I just thought, 'God bless these people, they're performers, but they should put their pens down.' "

Her book coincides with the release of a DVD of the same title that includes visceral, sometimes disturbing, footage of her avant-garde band, Suckdog; operas staged with her then-husband, the French performance artist Jean Louis Costes; and recent film shorts made with friends. "I think it's an awesome, entertaining hour of stuff," she says. "I never see anything like this. And I know it has a real impact on people, because I played an old video one time at a party, and a good friend of mine sobbed and left, and it cleared the entire room. . . . And I just thought, you know, when was the last time there was a good room clearer? And I just thought that I should give this gift to the American public."

Clearly, Carver can laugh about some of the over-the-top stunts she has pulled. But while the DVD and book contain some candid moments that a less exhibitionistic artist might not want to bring to light, Carver delights in pushing both her own boundaries and her audience's preconceptions and comfort zones. In her book, Carver describes diving into topics that made her feel uncomfortable when she was writing, because she knew she was getting to the marrow of important moments in her life.

There are two areas, however, where candor has been especially difficult. The first is her tumultuous second marriage to musician Boyd Rice, a contentious figure often accused of having neo-Nazi leanings, whom Carver describes in her new book as an abusive alcoholic while she was married to him. In her book, she says she has never been entirely truthful about the marriage, because it was too difficult for her to reconcile the experience. "I always completely avoided that in Rollerderby and in my other books, and everything was happy, happy," she says. "But, I think that all of my other ideas about writing, and life, and women, is that, if you tell the truth, then you can set somebody else partly free from having to follow some bad road all of the way to the end."

GEOFF HOESTER FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Having bared all herself, "Drugs Are Nice" author Lisa Carver finds many people drawn to reveal themselves to her.

■ **Lisa Carver will perform "My 15-Minute Date With GG Allin in 1980," at a Very Scary TransWreck Halloween Special tonight at 8 at Club Europa (Buzz), 51 Stuart St., Boston. Tickets for the 19-plus show are $8-$10. Call 617-288-8145.**

Carver has also avoided discussing her children in print. After all, it's hard enough having your parents reveal your baby pictures and childhood peccadilloes to a new beau, let alone to the whole world. But Carver has recently relented somewhat. In last month's Glamour magazine, she candidly discusses the chromosomal deletion her son was born with, and the physical and developmental setbacks it has caused him. Carver says she hopes her story can help other parents in similar situations and help make her son's life easier by raising public awareness about the condition. "There might be a lot of people out there who would get their first exposure to it, and would deal with their child's life, or their student's life better," she says. "I weighed it, and I thought, 'You know what, it's worth it.' "

Her ability to present painful experiences without playing the victim is a unique and inspiring characteristic, says Jill Soloway, an Emmy-nominated writer and co-executive producer for HBO's "Six Feet Under," who recently published her first book of humorous autobiographical essays, "Tiny Libs in Shiny Pants." Even though she jokes that she was too much of a nice Jewish girl to seek out the counterculture that Carver embraced, Soloway is a longtime fan of Carver's work who explores cultural perceptions of female sexuality and gender roles in her own writing.

"I'm always trying to be like her when I'm writing," Soloway says. "I'm always . . . writing to Lisa, writing for Lisa, even if, for a long time, I didn't even know her. And you know, now I do, and I don't have to literally think about writing to her. But that's a lot of my voice, you know, 'Would she think this is funny?' "

Carver is used to people addressing their writing and their confessions to her. Having based all herself, Carver finds many people drawn to reveal themselves to her. Perhaps this is the key to her power as a writer and a cultural critic.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with any thought or impulse that crosses your mind, even the impulse to not like your children," she says. "I think we all get the worst ideas, especially if we're trying not to. . . . I feel saddened if somebody is obviously not able to control their impulses, and there are kids involved, and they are putting their kids into a precarious situation because they're so nuts. There's nothing wrong with being nuts, but it just saddens me if there's any kids there. But other than that, no, you could tell me anything."

A witch hunt long before days of Salem

By Michael Kenney
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A coastal market town with a busy harbor. Warfare threatening along the region's borders. And into those unsettled times, a witch hunt, trials, and hangings.

Not Salem. That would be a half-century later, but Manningtree and other towns in East Anglia — the very counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex from which so many of New England's colonists had come.

England was "[sliding] into chaos," writes historian Malcolm Gaskill, and in "Witchfinders," he presents a riveting account of the hunt for witches in East Anglia during the mid-1640s as civil war between King Charles I and Parliament was raging across England.

And a "callow, vainglorious gentleman" named Matthew Hopkins was eager to become the engine of persecution, writes Gaskill. Together with another "Manningtree gentleman," John Stearne, they set off on a two-year scouring of the region. It's unclear why Hopkins "had begun to worry about witches," but he held a parliamentary commission and a conspiracy woodcut depicts him as "Witch Finder Generall."

Gaskill recounts with graphic detail the accusations, the interrogations, and prurient searches for devil's marks – "secret nipples suckled by unseen imps" and the rest – the tortures and executions.

As the witch hunt widened, some 300 people, mostly women – many widows – would be interrogated, and some 100 executed.

Book Review

Witchfinders
A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy
By Malcolm Gaskill
Harvard University Press, 364 pp., $29.95

The "largest witch trial ever staged in England" — with 29 accused witches, and Hopkins among the witnesses – occurred at Colchester in Essex in July 1645.

But that day-long trial marked a turning point. While 19 of the accused would be hanged, writes Gaskill, "[it] was soon to be followed by the unraveling of the witchfinders' deeds and lives."

With a growing sense that the witch hunts had become "disorderly," an increasing number of men were prepared to stand up for established legal procedures. They became known as "sticklers," taking their lead from John Gaule, a minister who argued that witchfinding as it was being practiced, "usurped the authority" of heaven and established government.

"Better than any other reason," Gaskill writes, "this [view] explains why witchfinders had never troubled England before: until the upheavals of the civil war, the state . . . had been too effective to permit their existence."

Witch hunting in England would continue well into the 18th century, but never again on that scale.

In Salem, as Mary Beth Norton argued persuasively in her 2002 study, "In the Devil's Snare," the witchcraft crisis of 1692 "can only be fully understood by viewing [it] as intricately related to concurrent political and military affairs in northern New England" – specifically, the Indian raids on the northern frontier settlements.

Still, the fascination continues. Salem has managed to turn its witchcraft crisis into a civic festival. And in East Anglia, sightings of Matthew Hopkins's ghost are reported and "the anguished cries" of one of his victims are said "to echo over the Stour Estuary." All, Gaskill writes, "testifying to the power of memory and tradition."

There's something extra in 'Ordinary'

▶ "ORDINARY HEROES"
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The clunky book-within-a-book device adds neither grace nor suspense to the story. But leaving that aside, what Turow has constructed is an intricate combination of action and sentiment, with a dynamic, compelling plot.

Ordinary Heroes
By Scott Turow
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 371 pp., $25

The war scenes are remarkable for their newness, almost impossible, I would have thought, in a novel about perhaps the most written-about war ever fought. Again, he does it by singling out the perfect, telling detail:

"In Bron I saw a barmaid set upon by six or seven youths in resistance armbands who cut off all her hair as punishment for sleeping with Nazis. She endured her shearing with a pliancy that might not have been much different than the way she'd accepted her German suitors. She said nothing, merely wept and sat absolutely still, except for one arm that moved entirely on its own, bucking against her side like the wing of some domesticated fowl engaged in a futile attempt at flight."

But best of all are Turow's characterizations, which are full, multilayered and ring true as a tuning fork – particularly of General Tindle, a complex man whose conscience suffers for every soldier who died under his command — but who also, rumor has it, abuses his living soldiers in disgusting ways. Then there is Gita Lodz, the major's mysterious female compatriot and possibly his lover. Gita is an absolutely marvelous creation, someone who (and I don't say this lightly) deserves to enter literature's list of immortals.

I've always suspected that Turow's talents were being drained on the genre fiction he seemed to prefer writing. Not that there's anything wrong with courtroom thrillers; and Turow has written some classics (notably "Presumed Innocent," 1987). But the essence of any genre is its formulaic similarity with all the others of its kind. What it lacks is singularity: precisely the gift that the best writers can bring to their readers. It was clear that Turow could do better, and now he has.

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